

EQUAL PROTECTION AND RIGHTS FOR ALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Equality Act, long overdue legislation to continue the progress made under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Opportunity Act, and other vital laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

These civil rights laws were passed to provide critical protections for people who unnecessarily live in fear and were unfairly persecuted simply because of who they were. They were passed because the promise of America—equal treatment under the law—was non-negotiable. It is still nonnegotiable.

So with the Equality Act, we must take the next step to guarantee equal protection and rights under the law for all, no matter who you love or your gender identity. The Equality Act seeks to stamp out discrimination against the LGBTQIA community—something that we, unfortunately, see far too often.

Mr. Speaker, no one should face discrimination in employment, housing, education, public space, or federally funded programs because of who they are or who they love. I am proud to be an ally of the LGBTQIA community and have worked to advance these rights and protections with groups and individuals throughout my career in public service, including hiring an out, HIV positive, gay man to serve as my first Congressional chief of staff.

In 1986, while serving on the New York City Council, I introduced the first bill to legally recognize same-sex partnerships in New York State history, and I had to threaten the city of New York to even get the bill printed. City officials said the bill was unconstitutional and could not even be printed. And while we have made great progress—the bill was printed and passed since then—we still have work to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that New York State recently enacted legislation to repeal the “walking while trans” ban, but we must ensure that the LGBTQIA community has these protections and equal rights all throughout the country. Access to equal rights should not depend on your ZIP Code.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join me today in voting to pass the Equality Act so that every American, regardless of who they love has equal protection under the law.

HONORING THE DIVINE NINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as Black History Month comes to an end, I rise today to honor the organizations that have served as the training ground for many of our Nation's most extraordinary leaders. These organizations have fostered and empowered generations of bold, brilliant, and humane leaders, and they continue their transformational work today.

Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the Divine Nine, the historically Black fraternities and sororities of the National Pan-Hellenic Council. This past year, they have played a pivotal role in helping communities deal with the COVID crisis, and they have also registered many people to vote and brought many people to the polls.

The Divine Nine organizations are:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity founded in 1906 at Cornell University. Their brotherhood includes the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, and includes the president of the National Urban League, Marc Morial. Also, in Congress, we are honored to have Congressmen EMANUEL CLEAVER, DANNY DAVIS, AL GREEN, GREGORY MEEKS, DAVID SCOTT, BOBBY SCOTT, STEVEN HORSFORD, and Senator WARNOCK. They are led by the honorable General President Dr. Willis L. Lonzer, III.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority founded in 1908 at Howard University. Their sisterhood proudly boasts having civil rights leaders, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King; and, of course, their sisterhood also includes our very own Vice President, KAMALA HARRIS.

Members of Congress are: SHEILA JACKSON LEE, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, TERRI SEWELL, FREDERICA WILSON, ALMA ADAMS, BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, NIKEMA WILLIAMS, and LAUREN UNDERWOOD.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity founded in 1911 at Indiana University. Among their notable achievers are: Astronaut, Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr.; civil rights leader, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy; and former congressman, the late John Conyers.

Members of Congress include: SANFORD BISHOP, ALCEE HASTINGS, BENNIE THOMPSON, HAKEEM JEFFRIES, AL LAWSON, and DON McEACHIN. And they are led by the Grand Polemarch Reuben A. Shelton, and a former colleague, Lacy Clay.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity founded in 1911 at Howard University. They include in their ranks: Poet, playwright, and author, Langston Hughes, and civil rights activist and reverend, Jesse Jackson, Jr.

House Members are: House Democratic Whip, JAMES CLYBURN of South Carolina, HANK JOHNSON of Georgia, and KWEISI MFUME of Maryland. Their honorable Grand Basileus is Dr. David Marion.

Delta Sigma Theta founded in 1913 at Howard University. Deltas count as their sisters, the first Black congresswoman, Shirley Chisholm, and Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women.

Their membership in the House includes: Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, YVETTE CLARKE, JOYCE BEATTY, VAL DEMINGS, STACEY PLASKETT, LUCY MCBATH, and BRENDA LAWRENCE. Their honorable President is Beverly E. Smith.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity founded in 1914 at Howard University. Not only are the Sigmas the fraternity of my husband, Dr. Nathaniel Horn, they also include: The late, great Congressmen John Lewis and Elijah Cummings, civil rights pioneer and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Philip Randolph, and also record-setter, Jerry Rice, and a current congressman, ADRIANO ESPAILLAT. Their honorable International President is Michael Cristal.

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Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, founded in 1920, just finished celebrating their 100th year. Notable sisters include: inventor Annie Turnbo Malone; Zora Neale Hurston; the House also was honored to have the late Congresswoman Julia Carson and former Congresswoman Donna Edwards; and their honorable president, Valerie Hollingsworth-Baker.

Sigma Gamma Rho, my favorite sorority, was founded in 1922 at Butler University. The late Congresswoman Lindy Boggs and former Congresswoman Corrine Brown honored this House. Also, they join members who are the first African-American winner of an Academy Award, Hattie McDaniel; the first Black woman CPA, Mary T. Washington Wylie; and our esteemed grand basileus, Rasheeda S. Liberty.

Finally, Iota Phi Theta was founded in 1963 at Morgan State University. Members of their crew are Spencer Christian from “Good Morning America”; Terrence C. Carson, known as “Kyle” from “Living Single”; and also our fellow colleague, Congressman BOBBY RUSH. Their honorable grand polaris is Andre R. Mason.

From standing up for women's suffrage, civil rights, and ending Jim Crow to leading industries, medical advancements, and e-innovation, the Divine Nine has been at the forefront of progress, and I am so proud to be a member.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 17 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas) at noon.